DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 560 CS 011 980

AUTHOR Vogt, MaryEllen
TITLE Individual Goal-Setting: Preservice Teachers Developing the Agenda.
PUB DATE 1 Dec 94
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of The National Reading Conference (San Diego, CA, November 30-December 3, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Higher Education; *Literacy; Methods Courses; *Portfolio Assessment; *Portfolios (Background Materials); *Preservice Teacher Education; Secondary Education; *Student Educational Objectives; Student Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Goal Setting; *Preservice Teachers; Writing Contexts

ABSTRACT

To prepare preservice teachers to implement performance-based assessment in their eventual classrooms and to give them experience in developing their own academic portfolios, some teacher educators are moving toward the portfolio method for assessing their preservice teachers in methods courses. A study evaluated the nature of preservice teachers' goal-setting and self-assessment within the portfolio process through questionnaire data collected from 36 preservice teachers at three different points during a one-semester reading methods course. Within their portfolios students were to demonstrate competence in the following areas: (1) understanding of the history of elementary and secondary literacy instruction; (2) understanding of the theories and principles that support literacy instruction; (3) knowledge of the interrelationship between assessment and instruction; (4) ability to assess, plan, and reflect upon the instruction; and (5) knowledge of interesting and appealing trade books. Questionnaires collected early in the semester showed that students' thoughts about literacy goals varied greatly; 13% indicated that they had not thought about goals at all. By the middle of the semester, results showed that nearly all students had clarified and narrowed their goals. And results at the end of the semester showed that all but two were giving positive accounts of their experiences. Some students (33%) indicated that they did not have enough time to accomplish the goals they desired. Preservice teachers need to be required to think about ways to improve and expand their own literacy; further, a formalized goal-setting process appears to be important. (TB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 378 560

Individual Goal-Setting: Preservice Teachers Developing the Agenda

MaryEllen Vogt
College of Education
California State University, Long Beach

Paper presented to the National Reading Conference
December 1, 1994
San Diego, CA

The use of portfolios for the assessment of student achievement and progress is becoming more common in elementary and secondary schools throughout the country, most likely because of its advocacy by reading/language arts reformers (Graves & Sunstein, 1992; Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1991). Grounded in constructivist theory, assessment which utilizes student portfolios is believed to better represent student performance, because it is situated and authentic (McLaughlin & Kennedy, 1993).

In order to prepare preservice teachers to implement performance-based assessment in their eventual classrooms and to give them experience in developing their own academic portfolios, some teacher educators are also moving toward alternative means for assessing their preservice teachers in methods courses (Barton & Collins, 1993; Gellman, 1993; Mosenthal, 1993; Ohlhausen, Perkins, & Jones, 1993; Winsor, 1993). The benefits of using portfolios to assess preservice teachers' understandings and applications of what they are learning in literacy methods courses, include: 1) an increased appreciation for the portfolio process; 2) a deeper understanding of course content than with more traditional evaluation methods, such as assigned projects and exams; 3) greater commitment on the part of preservice teachers to learn and apply course content (i.e., a greater "buy-in"); and 4) an increase in the number of preservice teachers who believe that portfolios will eventually have a place in the assessment of their own students (Vogt, Ruddell & McLaughlin, 1993).

The purpose of this paper is to describe the nature of preservice teachers' goal-setting and self-assessment within the portfolio process through questionnaire data collected from 36 preservice teachers over the course of their one semester secondary reading methods course. The data were collected to determine: 1) if having preservice teachers set their own literacy goals has any merit in terms of helping them understand the portfolio process; 2) if preservice teachers will set realistic literacy goals and then attempt to reach them over the course of a semester; 3) if preservice teachers feel the literacy goal-setting experience is of value to them; and 4) if there are implications from their experience which they will attempt to carry into their eventual teaching.

CS011850

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
M. Vogt
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Background

For three years, I have been using portfolios as the primary means of assessment in my secondary reading methods courses. I administer no quizzes or exams and have no assigned projects or papers, other than the portfolios which must be created by each student. Within their portfolios, students must demonstrate their competence for each of the following course goals:

1. The student will demonstrate an understanding of the history of elementary and secondary literacy instruction and the relationship between that history and his/her own literacy development.

2. The student will demonstrate an understanding of the theories and principles which support literacy instruction, and of current beliefs and methods for incorporating reading and writing in the content areas.

3. The student will demonstrate knowledge of the interrelationship between assessment and instruction; skill in planning instruction, including SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English), using specific reading and writing strategies; and skill in planning instruction using cooperative learning.

4. The student will demonstrate the ability to assess, plan and reflect upon the instruction of one or more students who need assistance in any or all of the following areas: reading, writing, study skills and/or specific content area learning.

5. The student will demonstrate knowledge of interesting and appealing trade books for secondary school students, including books written by, for and about people of a culture different from his/her own.

The preceding goals were distilled from twenty-two course objectives that I used prior to implementing portfolios. For each of the five goals, students are to submit whatever evidence they wish of their understanding and application. Written work, audio- and videotapes, observation and interview data, student-created software programs, lesson and unit plans, poetry, artwork, homemade books and posters have all been submitted as evidence. A detailed rationale statement must precede each piece of evidence clearly explaining what is submitted and why it best demonstrates the student's understanding and application of the respective goal. Students are guided in their collection of evidence by a detailed syllabus, teacher modeling and explanation, and a great deal of class discussion and sharing.

Initial student response to the portfolio process is somewhat negative, primarily because of the apprehension about something so new. However, by the end of the semester, 94.5% of students engaged in the portfolio experience report strongly positive feelings about the process (Vogt, Ruddell, & McLaughlin, 1993).

Still, I have felt for the past few semesters that something has been missing. As the professor, I am the one who determines the goals, facilitates portfolio discussions, sets the due-dates for the two portfolio submissions, and then eventually evaluates them. In essence, I am the one determining the parameters, though students have considerable choice and flexibility about the nature of their submissions. What has seemed inauthentic is that students have not been involved in the goal-setting process, and there have been few opportunities for self-assessment. Also, there is no way to view this type of assessment over time, or make it continuous and ongoing (Valencia, Hiebert, & Afflerbach, 1994).

Therefore, I decided I needed to find a way to have my methods students more involved in setting goals and assessing their own progress in meeting them, over time.

Therefore, for the fall semester, 1994, a sixth course goal was added:

6. The student will demonstrate the ability to set, and work toward fulfilling, a personal literacy-related goal.

The syllabus explanation for this goal follows:

Show that you have set a goal for yourself which is literacy-related and have established a plan and timeline for reaching the goal. Show that you have either fulfilled the goal or are making progress toward fulfilling it.

Possibilities: The sky's the limit! What would you enjoy doing this very busy semester? Since individual goal-setting is an important part of the portfolio experience, think about something you would like to accomplish. For example: Is there something you've been putting off reading? Is there a professional journal you've wanted to subscribe to and read? Are there just some professional journal articles you'd like to read? Would it just be nice to take time to read the newspaper on a regular basis? Would you like to improve your ability to use a word processor? Have you been delinquent in writing letters home? Would you like to read more frequently and more regularly to your children? Have you been wanting to establish an idea file for teaching your subject? Have you wanted to develop your own vocabulary? Would you just like to build in some time to enjoy some leisure reading? Would you enjoy writing on a daily basis in a journal? Is there an expert in your field that you have wanted to learn more about? (Hint: Don't go nuts here and bite off more than you can chew. This Goal is supposed to be fun and personally satisfying...so keep your personal Goal realistic.)

Evaluation Criteria: a) the personal goal you have set; b) your plan for fulfilling it; c) your progress as to its attainment. This goal is worth ten percent of the course grade.

Because the course is for secondary preservice teachers from a variety of academic disciplines, I wanted to be sure there was a great deal of flexibility in the goal. The "possibilities" listed above are simply meant to stimulate thinking; they are not suggestions, options or choices that must be followed. For some students they serve as guideposts; others select totally different pieces of evidence. Each of the six goals also has some "possibilities" listed, so Goal 6 is consistent in format with the other five course goals.

Data Collection

Three questionnaires were given to thirty-six students who were enrolled in EDSE 457, Reading in the Secondary Schools, a course required of all students in the Single Subject (Secondary) Credential Program at California State University, Long Beach. All students are in the fifth year credential program and are post-baccalaureate students. Of the sample, eighteen are currently working full-time in addition to taking credential

courses in the evening. Three students are working part-time and fifteen indicated they were full-time students.

During the third week of the semester, the students were asked to respond to three statements:

1) Describe the thinking you have done to this point about the literacy goal, and on a scale of 1-5, attach a number to the amount of time you have given to this goal, with 5 = a great deal of time and 1 = no time spent thinking about it;
2) Describe your feelings about the requirement to create your own literacy goal;
3) State what you think your goal will be.

At midpoint in the semester, the 36 students were asked:

1) What is your literacy goal?
2) What are you doing to monitor your progress?
3) Do you think you will meet your goal? If not, why not?

At the end of the semester, the students were asked:

1) Describe your feelings about creating your own goal;
2) State your goal and briefly describe your progress toward attaining it;
3) What are the implications, if any, for your own teaching?
4) Should the personal literacy goal continue as a requirement for the course portfolio? If not, why not?

Students were asked to complete all three questionnaires anonymously.

Findings

At the beginning of the semester, by the third week of class, the students' comments about the amount of time they had thought about their literacy goals were varied. Some expressed they had done a great deal of thinking about their literacy goals, while others indicated they had not thought about them since they heard about the requirement the first night of class: "How much thinking have I done? Zilch!" However, another student stated, "I have done an enormous amount of thinking related to this goal. First, I came up with seven areas where I need to improve my literacy. Then, I narrowed it down to two. However, I favor one of them."

The distribution of student responses along the 1-5 scale which indicates the amount of time students had spent thinking about the goal within the first three weeks of class follows:

1 = 13% (no thought)
2 = 33%
3 = 30.5%
4 = 8%
5 = 13.8% (a great deal of thought)

The most interesting aspect of the first questionnaire concerned the students' reactions to determining a literacy goal for themselves. Of the thirty-six responses, 53% were positive: "My initial reaction was excitement;" "I had a sense this might be the push I have needed to fulfill a personal desire;" "I was happy that I would have some input as to the requirements of the course;" "Goal setting is quite common. I think it's a good idea. I see my sons being required to do it in school;" "Amazement;" "I think it's a great idea---

even we, as teachers, need to be constantly conscious of improving our own literacy;" "This is the best goal of all!"

Eleven percent indicated what appeared to be a mild interest or apathy: "My initial reaction was reserved interest;" "I thought about how little time and effort I could realistically give to it this semester;" "I thought, 'I am literate enough.' After all, I am a graduate student."

Thirty six percent of the students reported negative feelings at the beginning of the semester: "FEAR; I did not want to look within myself and see a problem;" "My first reaction was 'oh no....something more to do, more work;" "I didn't really want to have one. Why am I here (in class) when there's a football game on?" "Confusion about exactly how to prove this goal is completed;" "I was caught off guard. I am so used to having a set agenda and/or criteria already made up."

At the beginning of the semester, the nature of the goals that students thought they might strive to attain were also varied: "To read 3-4 books;" "Read the newspaper three times a week;" "Maybe start a book or journal about my sons' life;" "Look through a dictionary to improve my vocabulary;" "Complete a journal that will contain personal information;" "Read more classics and improve my Japanese;" "Subscribe to a magazine like the *Readers' Digest*;" "Read at least one novel every two weeks;" "I have thought about reading some books about aphasia." What is notable about nearly all the responses is that they are vague, global and most appear quite lofty. I was surprised by the students' lack of clarity or definition until I reflected on the fact that the entire portfolio process was very unfamiliar to them at this time and they were still unclear as what *my* expectations were.

Mid-Point of the Semester

By the mid-point in the semester, nearly all students had clarified and narrowed their literacy goals. Three students stated they had not begun their literacy goals; the rest of the students had either begun on their goals or were working actively toward meeting them. Statements like the following were common: "I believe my original literacy goal was to read 3-4 books; I want to reevaluate this goal by narrowing it to at least two books;" "I want to finish one book for pleasure: *The Client*;" "I want to improve my vocabulary and I've been highlighting words and looking them up. I'm also using a *Thesaurus* to learn new vocabulary;" "My goal is to finish writing some children's pieces I have been working on and submit one for publishing;" "My goal has been to increase my personal journal writing;" "I want to read all of my assigned readings for my classes;" "I want to make an idea file to fill with handouts and lesson plans;" "My literacy goal is to write a book about my Grandparents, mainly about the internment years."

Thirty-six percent of the students expressed at midpoint they had clear goals in mind, but were not collecting evidence to show they were monitoring their progress. These students seemed confused about this part of the process even though we had spent a significant amount of class time talking about setting *personal* goals (e.g., increasing exercise or losing weight), and had discussed how we could determine if we were making progress toward these goals (e.g., weighing each day, marking on a calendar the days we exercised, before-and-after pictures, etc.). It appeared these students had difficulty doing the same kind of thinking for their literacy goals: "I'm not doing anything to chart my

progress, yet;" "I'm not sure about this part;" "I haven't charted yet; I'll start;' "I've been working on my goal but haven't been recording my progress."

The remainder of the class (64%) indicated they were monitoring their progress in some way: "Everyday I try to read at least four articles in the newspaper and then check off these days on the calendar;" "I'm recording the days that I read, the amount of time and how many pages I have read;" "I have set up a certain time period every night devoted to reading for enjoyment. I'm having to sacrifice some study and recreation time and I sometimes feel torn between other things which need to get done, but, in the long run, I feel much better about myself as a whole;" "I'm tracking my progress through my actual journal entries."

When asked whether the students believed they would attain their goals, 17% indicated they thought they would. No one indicated his/her goal was unattainable; instead the students stated their goals were "life-long," "over the long haul," "something I want to become a habit."

End of Semester

During the second to the last class session, one week before the portfolios were due, the third questionnaire was distributed. When asked to describe feelings about the personal literacy goals, the students' responses were individualized and varied. The only commonality that existed across many responses (33%) was a concern about the lack of time students felt they had to accomplish their goals: "I have 1/2 of my story written but have not found the time to finish it;" "I like this goal, but wish I had more time to fulfill my true personal goals. I wish other assigned work was lessened to enable more time to work on this one;" "I don't feel that I met my goal because I did not have enough time on top of my studies."

The remainder of the students' comments, except for two, were positive accounts of their experiences: "I liked the idea of having a personal goal and I can now appreciate the process that it takes to plan and accomplish a goal;" "At first, I felt frustrated that my goal was to read a book on top of all the other things. I just completed my book and feel extremely good about it;" "I am happy with my goal that I set and how it turned out;" "I guess I realized I have always had these literacy goals but I've just never formally written them down;" "My goal was to read. I have been reading every night and have influenced my husband to read. I think this is a good idea;" "I feel really good about the goal, in that I'm on the verge of achieving both portions of it. I think having this as a goal was very useful in providing focus and motivation."

When the students described their goals at the end of the semester and these were compared with the mid-point goals, it was clear the goals had not changed significantly. Some had more focus ("I've organized my notes into a group of files and I'm finished!!"), while others became quite specific ("My goal was to learn to write a court report for juveniles in the probation system--overall, to send a minor home, based on a report written by me.") In comparing the three questionnaires, the personal literacy goals at the beginning of the semester were very unfocused; whereas, by the mid-point, nearly all students had a clear idea of what they wanted to accomplish.

Originally, I had assumed that students would find implications for their own teaching in terms of how they would assist their eventual students in setting learning goals

for themselves. Twenty-two percent stated this was what they had learned from the experience: "I think the most important implication for my own teaching is to help the students set short-term goals which will eventually lead to an ultimate goal;" "I've learned it is important to encourage students to set personal goals, and to model and demonstrate how personal goal-setting works, to send the message *why* personal goal-setting is important;" "By setting personal goals, I will be a model to my students and, in a nutshell, practice what I preach."

Seventy-eight percent of the students' responses, however, did not mention goal-setting as a part of their teaching, but instead included things they had learned about themselves: "I think I've learned that I must develop my own literacy skills and knowledge as well as encouraging my students do the same. How can I motivate students to read if I'm not doing it myself?" "I believe that by setting my own personal literacy goal, I forced myself to read a lot and, in the future, I believe that I will use my personal literacy to help my students in reading and writing in my content area;" "I learned I should not expect my students to be organized and dedicated to a goal if I am not dedicated myself. I am also aware of the difficulties of planning and following through on a goal;" "By setting goals you are able to learn from your mistakes and failures as well as your successes;" "Set goals that you're personally interested and involved in. Don't be too concerned about rigid schedules in obtaining it, but keep at it when you can;" "The implication is that it ceases to be a 'what if' and becomes an imperative. It's easy to say you'd like to do something, but the goal provides support and structure."

When asked whether the personal literacy goal should be maintained as a course and portfolio requirement, 94% of the students stated it should. Two students indicated they thought it should not. Their reasons follow: "I do not recommend using this goal in the portfolio because I feel it has been a lot of work. It has been good work, but I think it is too much;" "I don't like the idea of taking responsibility for one's own education."

Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

During the middle of the semester, after the students had completed the second questionnaire and we had discussed in class their literacy goals, I pondered the merits of this entire exercise. I wondered whether it was worthwhile and whether there would be any reason to continue the self-made goal in future semesters. My greatest fear was that students would just go through the motions to fulfill the requirement without learning anything about the portfolio process, especially in terms of how to help their own students learn to set and attain learning goals for themselves. That, after all, was my primary objective.

However, after reading the final questionnaire, talking in class about the personal literacy goals with ninety-five students and seeing their portfolio submissions, I am convinced of the merits of allowing students in reading methods classes to set personal literacy goals. Although I did not distribute formal questionnaires to my two other secondary methods classes, from our discussions and sharing, I feel confident they share the same feelings about the experience that have been expressed in this paper. What has surprised me is: 1) that preservice teachers need to be required to think about ways to improve or expand their own literacy; 2) that formalizing the goal-setting process appears to be the motivation they need to begin thinking about their own literacy; 3) that many are

feeling such pride in accomplishing relatively simple goals, such as beginning to read the newspaper several times a week; 4) that the overwhelming majority of students believe this is an important course requirement; and 5) that what they have learned from the experience extends beyond their teaching into their personal and private lives.

Finally, during discussion, I suggested to one class that I had thought about changing the requirement next semester to, "*Determine a personal **learning** goal related to this course's content.*" The students' reactions to this comment surprised me; they *all* stated that the personal goal should be "literacy-related", not course content-related. It will remain so.

References

Barton, J. & Collins, A. (1993). Portfolios in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 44* (3), 200-209.

Gellman, E.S. (1992-93). The use of portfolios in assessing teacher competence: Measurement issues. *Action in Teacher Education, 14* (4), 39-44.

Graves, D. H. & Sunstein, B.S. (1992). *Portfolio portraits*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

McLaughlin, M. & Kennedy, E. (1993). *A classroom teacher's guide to performance assessment.* Princeton, NJ: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Mosenthal, J. (1993). Constructing knowledge and expertise in literacy teaching: Portfolios in undergraduate teacher education. Paper presented to the National Reading Conference, Charleston, SC.

Ohlhausen, M., Perkins, P., & Jones, P. (February, 1994). Assessing self-assessment portfolios in a literacy methods class. Paper submitted to the College Reading Association.

Tierney, R., Carter, M., & Desai, L. (1991*). Portfolio assessment in the reading-writing classroom.* Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Valencia, S., Hiebert, E., & Afflerbach, P. (1994). *Authentic reading assessment: Practices and possibilities.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Vogt, M.E., McLaughlin, M., & Ruddell, M.R. (1993). Do as I do: Using portfolios to evaluate students in reading methods courses. Paper presented to the National Reading Conference, Charleston, SC.

Winsor, P. (1993). Let me show you my portfolio: Preservice teachers as language learners, users and teachers. Paper presented to the National Reading Conference, Charleston, SC.